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For Immediate Release

GSU Addresses Degree Completion Rates in Partnership with Regional Community Colleges

University Park, IL, April 21, 2010 - Governors State University (GSU) will host summit meeting between GSU President Elaine Maimon and presidents of 13 Chicago-area community colleges. This will be an important, historic event aimed at expanding educational opportunities for thousands of students throughout the metropolitan area. A document signing is scheduled for 11:30 a.m., April 30, in GSU's Hall of Governors at GSU in University Park.

At the summit, Dr. Maimon and presidents of the partner community colleges are expected to establish the Chicagoland Alliance for Degree Completion, which will engage in collaborative programs, efforts, and activities that facilitate and enhance student success toward matriculation and degree completion.

Alliance members will work together to simplify the transfer process for bachelor's degree completion by engaging in curricular articulation, dual admission, establishment and operation of degree completion centers, sharing of information, and coordination of admission and financial aid advising.

In establishing the Chicagoland Alliance for Degree Completion, GSU and its partner institutions are targeting low bachelor's degree completion rates among students who first attend community colleges. Among students who begin at community colleges directly after high school, only 10 percent complete a four year degree after six years of study. The rates for African American and Hispanic students are even lower, 5.9 percent and 3.1 percent respectively.

Graduation rates of community college students seeking associate degrees are also disappointingly low. Only 21 percent of students enrolling in Illinois community colleges graduate with an associate's degree after three years, with comparable degree completion rates for African Americans and Hispanics set at 9 and 13 percent.

At Governors State, 75 percent of all undergraduate students transfer from a community college. The university has a long, successful record of working with community college transfer students so that they fulfill their dream of a bachelor's degree. Similarly, GSU's African American graduation rate is 49.2 percent and the Latino rate is 56.9 percent - higher than the national average for universities across the nation.

GSU recently signed a dual admission agreement with Kankakee Community College that will serve as a model for partnerships with other institutions. KCC also hosts a GSU degree completion center where students can learn about credit transfer, financial aid, and other GSU programs. The university this fall will begin offering debt-free education to qualified community college transfer students through the GSU Promise plan.

President Obama recently called on Americans to reverse the slippage in degree completion by enrolling in community colleges and universities and working toward a life-changing degree. According to projections, more than 60 percent of all new jobs in the next 10 years will require a college degree. GSU wants its students to be ready for the future, and looks forward to working with its community college partners to ensure that students are prepared for an ever-changing world.

The summit is part of Community College Counselor Day at GSU, an annual event at which advisors and counselors from area community colleges learn about the latest initiatives designed so students can make a seamless transition from the community college to the university.